

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 1, 2, 4, 9, 10 and 12 as follows:

1. (currently amended) A dehydrated shelf stable vegetable product which comprises a vegetable piece having a moisture content of about 12% or less, having a substantially intact cellular structure, prepared by partially dehydrating vegetable pieces to a moisture content from about 8% to about 30%, compressing the vegetable piece in one dimension, and optionally where the moisture content of the partially dehydrated vegetable piece is not 12% or less, thereafter further dehydrating the compressed vegetable piece to a moisture content of about 12% or lower, wherein the vegetable piece when placed in water at a temperature of 90°C to 100°C without further application of heat is capable of rehydration substantially to its original fresh dimension and is of edible tenderness and texture instantly or within five minutes.

2. (currently amended) A vegetable product according to claim 1 wherein the vegetable is selected from the group consisting of carrots, peas, peppers, tomatoes, sweet corn, onion, squash, chillies, zucchini, mushroom, cabbage, celery, green beans, beetroot, and pumpkin, ~~and the like~~.

3. (original) A vegetable product according to claim 1 or 2 which includes one or more added solutes.

4. (currently amended) A vegetable product according to claim 3 wherein said solutes are selected from the group consisting of sodium chloride, potassium chloride, sodium lactate, potassium lactate, sodium citrate, glucose, sucrose, fructose, and sorbitol ~~and other water activity controlling solutes~~.

5. (original) A vegetable product according to claim 1 having a moisture content from about 2% to about 12%.

6. (original) A vegetable product according to claim 5 having a moisture content from 4% to 6%.

7. (original) A method according to claim 1 wherein the vegetable piece is dehydrated to a moisture content which is from about 8% to about 20%.

8. (original) A vegetable product according to claim 1 wherein the compressed vegetable piece is further dehydrated to a moisture content from about 2% to about 10%.

9. (currently amended) A process for the preparation of a dehydrated, rapidly rehydrating, vegetable product which comprises partially dehydrating vegetable pieces to a moisture content from about 8% to about 30%, compressing the vegetable piece in one dimension, and optionally where the moisture content of the partially dehydrated vegetable piece is not 12% or less, thereafter further dehydrating the compressed vegetable piece to a moisture content of about 12% or lower, wherein the vegetable piece when placed in water at a temperature of 90°C to 100°C without further application of heat is capable of rehydration substantially to its original fresh dimension and is of edible tenderness and texture instantly or within five minutes.

10. (currently amended) A process according to claim 9 wherein the vegetable is selected from the group consisting of carrots, peas, peppers, tomatoes, sweet corn, onion, squash, chillies, zucchini, mushroom, cabbage, celery, green beans, beetroot, and pumpkin, ~~and the like~~.

11. (original) A process according to claim 9 wherein prior to compressing the vegetable piece in one dimension one or more solutes are added to the piece.

12. (currently amended) A process according to claim 11 wherein said solutes are selected from the group consisting of sodium chloride, potassium chloride, sodium lactate, potassium lactate, sodium citrate, glucose, sucrose, fructose, and sorbitol ~~and other water activity controlling solutes~~.

13. (original) A process according to claim 9 wherein the compressed vegetable piece is dehydrated to a moisture content from about 2% to about 12%.

14. (original) A process according to claim 13 wherein the vegetable piece is dehydrated to a moisture content from 4% to 6%.
